

The Builder.

No. CCCIII.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1848.



WE are enabled to-day to place before our readers the plan of OSBORNE HOUSE, the marine residence of our gracious Queen, together with a perspective view of the garden front as completed.* Osborne is situated, as most of our readers know, at the northern point of the lozenge-formed Isle of Wight, in the immediate neighbourhood of East and West Cowes; about twelve miles from Southampton, across the Solent, and perhaps eight from Portsmouth. Its privacy, which is extreme, fitted it exactly for the quiet retreat that her Majesty and the Prince Consort desired; while it is delightfully open, commands a most beautiful country, and is readily accessible from town. In addition to Osborne House, as it then stood (formerly the residence of Mr. Fitzroy Blackford), and the surrounding grounds, the Barton estate, which adjoined these, was purchased by her Majesty, and taken into the inclosure. Other land was afterwards bought, and the whole now constitutes one estate of about 1,800 acres, or nearly three square miles, extending from East Cowes as far as King's Key, and is the private property of the Queen and Prince Albert.

At Barton, where an oratory was founded about the close of Henry the Third's reign, or at the commencement of that of Edward the First, there was a curious old building, known as Barton Court-house, with projecting wings, mullioned windows, gables, and large chimneys, probably not earlier, however, than the sixteenth century. To fit the place for its present purpose much of this old house was taken down, which led to remonstrances on the part of some who view with proper jealousy the removal of any of our ancient structures. It seems clear, however, that in this case it was absolutely necessary, and further that there was very little to interest in the parts removed. The eastern front, with its wings and porch of two stories, and the south front, the principal parts of the building, were kept up and restored; and the rest of the house was reconstructed in an accordant manner.

It now forms a residence for the bailiff, with the reservation of apartments to serve as a resting place for the Royal Family. The rooms are low and unpretending, but of most pleasant aspect; a few pictures and cabinets, judiciously placed, aiding this result.

According to the Domesday Survey, the manor of Barton was held in King Edward the Confessor's time by Bolla, and seems to have been then in the possession of William Fitz-Stur, with whose descendants it remained till the reign of Henry III., when, by the marriage of Walter de Insula with the heiress of the De Esture, it passed into the hands of that family. By John De Insula it was granted to the oratory of Barton (or Byrton), and in the reign of Henry VI. was given to the College of St. Mary, at Winchester, by whom it was transferred to her Majesty.†

Returning to Osborne: it was proposed, at first, to keep up the old house there, adding merely the outlying wing to the west, shewn, on our plan, to contain the principal apartments for the residence of the family. The first stone of this was laid under the direction of Mr. Thomas Cubitt, to whom the works were wholly entrusted, in June, 1845; and in September, 1846, if we are not mistaken, the wing was occupied. This is a square pile of building, about 65 feet each way, and comprises the drawing-room, dining-room, and billiard-room (referred to in the plan), and some smaller apartments. Projecting from the front of the main building is a lofty campanile, 30 feet square with vestibule, and an apartment one story in height. The drawing-room extends the whole length of the water front, and being open to the billiard-room (separated only by a screen of columns), forms a fine apartment.

Scattered about the residence are some statues and a few nice pictures by Stanfield, Uwins, Cope, and other of our artists. The whole of the building is fire-proof, the floors being formed of iron girders and brick arches, and the construction throughout is of the soundest character. The chimneys are cleverly brought together in the centre of the building, and made to form an architectural feature. The roof around them is flat, to afford a promenade, and consists of double brick arches, with a space between. The outer surface of the upper arches was made level with asphalt, and then paved. The upper part of the tower is fitted up as an observatory, and in the centre of it there is a circular staircase of teak opening on to the flat roof which covers it. The height of this tower is 100 feet, and its foundation is 60 feet above the sea. The views it commands are most extensive and beautiful. A stormy night spent here would be full of sublimity.

The whole of the building externally is formed in cement (a matter of regret). The style is Italian; the ground story and the angles above are rusticated; a large cornice, with consoles, runs all round the edifice, and is crowned by a balustrade.

This, then, was the extent of the building as first proposed, but a very short time probably sufficed to shew that more room was necessary. The circumstances which surround a monarch, even in retirement, are such as to enforce an extent of retinue and consequent amount of accommodation, beyond, perhaps, the desire of the individual. Without attempting, therefore, to trace the progress, suffice it to say that the old house has been taken down, and a pile of buildings, similar in character to that we have briefly described, has been erected in its place, including a second tower, for a clock, at the eastern extremity. Part of it is still unfinished.

Our illustrations shew the position and general arrangement of the building, but as we are most anxious not to present even the appearance of an attempt to invade a privacy which the illustrious owners have a right to claim, we have not sought to learn the appropriation of the various rooms, contenting ourselves simply with the indication of the principal apartments already given.* A corridor, the upper story of it open, connects the outlying wing with the new building. This corridor continues along the whole of one side of the latter, and forms a striking feature of the composition.

* Our plan is drawn to scale, but, by accident, the two internal corridors, into which the rooms open, are represented of less width than they really are.

On the side towards the water, which occupies an extent of 280 feet, the ground is much lower, and a series of balustraded terraces with flights of steps from one to the other, concur to increase greatly the effect of the building. The gardens filled with fine shrubs and trees, some of them planted by the infant princes, have made rapid progress, and now present a most luxuriant aspect.

Far be it from us to pretend to a knowledge of what passes in the home of our Sovereign: but we shall be deceived if Osborne do not become hallowed in the eyes of Englishmen as the seat of such quiet virtues, affectionate solitudes, and intellectual enjoyments, as are not usually the characteristics of the occupants of thrones.

Recent proceedings in respect of a discreditable attempt to publish some etchings made by the Queen and the Prince, have served to give to the world a transient glance into the palace in hours of retirement. The view that was opened, annoying as the circumstances have doubtless been, is not to be regretted, and can scarcely fail to increase the respect and attachment with which the people of this kingdom regard their Sovereign and Her husband:—truly, "one touch of nature makes the whole world kind." We only give expression to the unanimous voice of the nation when we cry, with respectful sincerity—

Long Life to the Queen and the Prince.

THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS.

PRESENTATION OF MEDALS.

ON Monday the 20th the first ordinary general meeting of the session was held. The president, Earl de Grey, was in the chair, and the rooms were crowded. More than 200 persons were present, including the greater number of the leading members of the profession.

Mr. Henry Currey having been elected an associate, and a long list of donations announced, the president said that was perhaps the best moment to state, respecting the announcement made by the council last session that they hoped to arrange to print all the papers read at the meetings,—that on consideration, and with reference to the state of the funds, it was considered desirable to postpone the intention. He hoped this would not have the effect of preventing members from contributing their items of information. The certainty of having a paper printed was doubtless a stimulus to its production, and he hoped that before long the desired arrangement would be made. The president then proceeded with some well-chosen words of commendation to present the medals and premiums awarded during the last session, namely:—To Mr. James MacLaren, of Edinburgh, for a design for a building to contain public baths, the Soane Medallion; to Mr. Henry Bayly Garling, associate, for the best Essay on the Application of Sculpture and Sculptured Ornament to Architecture (printed in the BUILDER), the Silver Medal of the Institute; to Mr. Thos. Hill, student, for a design for a garden pavilion, &c., Sir Wm. Chambers' "Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture;" and to Mr. Bright Smith, student, for the best Series of Sketches from Subjects given monthly by the council during the season. "Gwilt's Encyclopædia of Architecture."

His lordship then said the next presentation he had to make was the Royal Gold Medal to Mr. Charles Robert Cockerell, R.A., in testimony of his distinguished merit as an architect; and he had much pride and gratification in being the instrument of conveying to him that mark of the Sovereign's favour. He was proud of having been the first to apply for the medal, and Mr. Cockerell might well be proud of being the first to receive it. The medal was granted by the Queen without a moment's hesitation; and instead of directing one to be given which had been applied or might be applied to other bodies, her Majesty had ordered the preparation of a die expressly for

* See p. 37.

† Prefixed to "A Descriptive Account of the late Convent or Oratory of Barton, in the Isle of Wight," by John Adkins Barton, published in the Winchester volume of the British Archaeological Association, whence we take this outline of the descent of the manor, are two sketches of the old house.